

NEWS RELEASE

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Grand Jury Charges Previously Deported Mexican Citizen with Conspiracy to Distribute Cocaine in Cass County

Springfield, IL- Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a federal grand jury returned a three-count indictment today charging a citizen of Mexico, Juan Sanchez, also known as Michael Benitez, age 32, of Monmouth, Illinois, with unlawful reentry after deportation; conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine; and distribution of cocaine.

The indictment alleges Sanchez was in Cass county, Illinois on November 21, 2006 after he was deported and removed from the U.S. in July 1997. The indictment further alleges Sanchez conspired to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine in Cass county from May 2006 through November 21, 2006.

Sanchez was arrested on November 21, 2006, and charged in a federal criminal complaint. According to the affidavit filed in support of the complaint, agents with the Illinois State Police Central Illinois Enforcement Group and the Drug Enforcement Administration established surveillance of a residence in Beardstown, Illinois on November 22, 2006, based on information that identified Sanchez as making weekly deliveries of cocaine to the area. The affidavit alleges agents subsequently observed Sanchez deliver cocaine to another individual at a site along south Beardstown Drainage Road.

The Drug Enforcement Administration, Illinois State Police, the Central Illinois Enforcement Group and Immigration and Customs Enforcement are investigating the case which is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregory M. Gilmore.

During a court hearing on November 22, 2006, Sanchez consented to detention in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service pending trial. If convicted, the statutory penalty for unlawful reentry after deportation is up to 10 years in prison. For conspiracy to distribute 500 or more grams of cocaine, the mandatory minimum sentence is five years to 40 years in prison; for distribution of cocaine, the penalty is up to 20 years in prison.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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